



Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Member Organizations

**The Umbrella Center for
Domestic Violence Services**
Ansonia, CT

The Center for Family Justice
Bridgeport, CT

Women's Center
Danbury, CT

**Domestic Violence Program
United Services**
Dayville, CT

**Network Against Domestic
Abuse**
Enfield, CT

**Domestic Abuse Services
Greenwich YWCA**
Greenwich, CT

Interval House
Hartford, CT

**Chrysalis Domestic Violence
Services**
Meriden, CT

New Horizons
Middletown, CT

Prudence Crandall Center
New Britain, CT

**The Umbrella Center for
Domestic Violence Services**
New Haven, CT

Safe Futures
New London, CT

Domestic Violence Crisis Center
Norwalk, CT

Women's Support Services
Sharon, CT

Domestic Violence Crisis Center
Stamford, CT

Susan B. Anthony Project
Torrington, CT

Safe Haven
Waterbury, CT

**Domestic Violence Program
United Services**
Willimantic, CT

Testimony Supporting

HB 6376, AA Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair

HB 6380, AAC the Disclosure of Salary Range for a Vacant Position

Labor & Public Employees Committee February 9, 2021

Good afternoon Senator Kushner, Representative Porter, Senator Sampson, Representative Arora, and members of the committee. CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV) is the state's leading voice for victims of domestic violence and those who serve them. Our 18 member organizations provide essential services to nearly 40,000 victims of domestic violence each year. Services provided include 24-hour crisis response, emergency shelter, safety planning, counseling, support groups and court advocacy.

We urge your support of HB 6376.

This bill seeks to prohibit discrimination on the basis of ethnic hairstyles historically associated with race, by adopting what is commonly referred to as the CROWN Act. No one should be discriminated against in the workplace or in schools because of their natural hairstyle, but unfortunately this is a common occurrence in a society built upon the systemic oppression of communities of color.

Discrimination based on hairstyle disproportionately impacts Black women. According to the 2019 Dove Crown Act Research Study, black women's hair is 3x more likely to be perceived as unprofessional and these women are 1.5x more likely to be sent home from the workplace because of their hair. Black women are 30% more likely to be made aware of a formal workplace appearance policy and are 80% more likely to change their natural hair to fit in at their office.

For Black women who are survivors of domestic violence, this is another unacceptable form of discrimination that ultimately limits their financial stability, leading to fewer options and thereby making them less safe. Financial stressors can severely compound abusive relationships. Regardless of whether a survivor is choosing to remain in or leave that relationship, diminished educational or career opportunities negatively impact the safety of the entire family and ultimately make survivors financially dependent upon their abuser, reducing their ability to leave.

Seven states have passed The CROWN Act into law and in 2020 H.R. 5309 was passed by the U.S. House of Representatives and sent to the U.S. Senate. While current anti-discrimination laws protect the choice to wear an afro, afros are not the only natural presentation of Black hair. Connecticut's proposal ensures protection against discrimination based on hairstyles by specifying in CGS §46a-51 that the protected class of race also includes traits historically associated with race identification, such as hair texture and hairstyles. By advancing the acceptance of protective hairstyles within corporate culture, this bill will draw attention to cultural and racial sensitivity in workplace grooming policies, extending beyond hair. We urge your support.

We urge your support of HB 6380.

This bill seeks to require employers to disclose salary ranges for vacant positions and to provide comparable pay for comparable work. While Connecticut has taken positive

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steps in recent years to close the wage gap, there is more that needs to be done to ensure pay equity for women, particularly women of color.

Connecticut's current wage gap results in women, on average, earning \$0.84 for every dollar paid to a man. And, as with most issues impacting women, the effects of the wage gap are even harsher for women of color in Connecticut, with Black women working full-time, year round earning \$0.57 to the dollar and Latina women earning \$0.48. According to the National Women's Law Center, on average, women in CT lose \$529,160 over the course of a 40-year career due to the gender wage gap. White women in CT lose \$637,280, Black women lose \$1,212,480, and Latinas lose \$1,488,800.

Domestic violence is not only exacerbated by the wage gap, but it can also contribute to the wage gap. Abusive relationships often force survivors out of educational opportunities and stable employment. It is not uncommon for abusers, seeking to maintain the dependence of and control over their victim, to commit acts that make the victim appear unreliable in the workplace. This results in missed opportunities for promotions and pay raises, which lead to economic insecurity and increased barriers. Survivors will face greater difficulty accessing vital resources such as affordable housing and legal assistance, leaving them with fewer options for financial independence and safety.

Ensuring both salary range transparency and comparable pay for comparable work can positively impact the wage gap. Studies show that when job applicants are clearly informed about the context for negotiations - including the range and types of compensation and benefits available - women are more successful at salary negotiation, which increases their earnings and closes the wage gap. This is supported by the fact that the wage gap is much narrower in the public sector, where agencies typically operate within transparent and public pay structures. It is also critical to amended existing "equal pay for equal work" statutory language to adapt to the realities of the modern workplace. By utilizing the term "comparable work," pay equity is examined more broadly across various roles that require substantially similar skill, effort and responsibility, addressing a long history of traditionally sex-segregated occupations with different pay scales. We urge your support.

Thank you for your consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns.

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